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FAITH AND WORKS

BY THE

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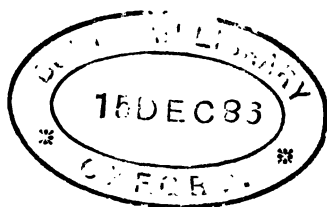
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FAITH AND WORKS.

I. THE place which faith occupies in the teaching of Scripture may be profitably discussed without dwelling on its supernatural origin and guidance—more especially if we are in any danger of losing our full sense of responsibility under the expected influence of an overpowering inspiration. In our bodily frames there are some organs which work independently of our will or consciousness, and others which we put in motion voluntarily and with conscious design. Now, in preserving physical life our part is not to rest satisfied because the processes of respiration, digestion, and assimilation are going on without our care, but to supply proper food, air, and exercise, by the use of the organs which are placed under our control. And the measures which we take to effect these purposes are taken, not because we disregard the inner unconscious functions, but because we assume them, and trust to their continuance. Just in the same way, there are involuntary and unconscious, and voluntary and

conscious functions in the mind. The former are beyond our knowledge and control; the latter are placed under our superintendence and management. The laws by which the mind grows, by which it takes in and assimilates external impressions, we have nothing to do with. But we have everything to do with the character of the impressions which we furnish to it, and the habits which we fix upon it. And the pains which we take to present pure images to the mind, and to avoid impure ones, to contract good habits of thought and to shun bad ones, are taken, not because we ignore the inward process which a power not our own is conducting, but because we admit and believe in it. According to these analogies, it may be very beneficial to discuss the external and intelligible side of faith.

II. The opinion, rather implied than distinctly avowed by some persons, that faith is wholly mysterious in its origin and nature, so that it is quite independent of reason or external influences, seems to proceed from a confusion between faith and its objects, belief and the things believed, and to base itself on the phenomena of matured belief rather than on those of its first stages, which are naturally an easier subject of investigation. The act of the mind when it assents to certain Christian doctrines, as, for instance, to the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Atonement, may be contemplated and comprehended while the

doctrines themselves lie beyond the range of comprehension; although, when the mind gets into a state of fusion with its tenet, when the doctrine interpenetrates and colours and characterizes the mind, it is only natural that the incomprehensibleness of the doctrine should conceal the reasonableness of its original adoption. The belief that Jesus was the Son of God is proved by His life, miracles, and doctrines. These avowedly appeal to our reason and affections. The consent of the understanding to the mysteries which He teaches is a voluntary deference to authority which has demonstrated itself to be more than human. Both the belief and the consent are rational acts, since a reason can be assigned for either. But after all has been said or conceded about the origin or possible modifications of faith, the essential matters that remain to be considered, the conditions under which it saves the soul, and the tokens that accompany salvation, must always stand, so long as we read the Scriptures and employ our understandings, in the full noonday of clearest observation.

III. The really important question in connection with the subject is this,—Whether there is any faculty, or condition, or frame of the mind, natural or inspired, or partly the one and partly the other (let it be called faith, or trust, or confidence, or resignation to God's will, or acquiescence in the plan of salvation), which, of itself, without external actions, renders men accepted

by God ; or whether, in order to reach this acceptance, in addition to the inward faculty or frame, external works are also required. This is the practical inquiry, in which all differences of opinion about faith culminate at last.

IV. Now, this question, stated as it has been, is capable of two very different meanings. It may be understood as expressing uncertainty whether there is any attitude or relation of man towards God which, without its having any tendency to affect or without actually affecting the conduct, gains the divine favour ; or it may be understood as raising the issue whether there is any attitude or relation which, considered apart from its natural and actual results in the conduct, without taking their worth or their existence into the account, secures our salvation. Faith without works may signify faith that has no tendency to produce works, and never does produce them ; or it may mean faith that has a tendency to produce works, and that does produce them, considered apart from them. Those two meanings should be kept separate and distinct. Although there are very few persons, perhaps, who would assert that they hope to be saved by faith without works, or by faith, and not by works, in the former sense, yet many persons are liable, in the intricacies of a complicated argument or in the heat of controversy, to lose their bearings, and to contend for some form of words which they have never clearly

defined for themselves. Some persons, for instance, expressly assert that we are saved without external works by the mere act of the mind or heart when it sees and believes that the atonement of Christ purchased pardon for all who accept it. Others, on the contrary, are of opinion that the mere inward act of belief is not sufficient, but that we must perform corresponding actions, live in holiness and obedience, and deny our evil desires; and that without acting thus we cannot be saved. It is obvious that, in this form of the controversy, they who maintain that we are saved by faith without works mean, though often unconsciously, without the works which are the product of faith; for there could be no conceivable object or meaning, in their case, in denying the necessity of works which have no connection with faith, seeing that their opponents, who hold that works are necessary to salvation, always mean the works of faith. St. Paul says that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law; but this differs widely from saying that we are saved by faith without the deeds of faith. In St. Paul's argument the opposing principles are faith and law. The Jews held that they could be saved by the deeds of the law without faith; or, if they did not formally hold it, such is the doctrine which St. Paul imagines and combats. With us the argument is in reality between faith considered by itself, and faith considered in conjunction with its works, some holding that we are saved by faith without any

consideration of the works of faith, without any kind of necessity for them; others holding that the works of faith are in some way indispensable to our salvation, as well as faith itself. Both these doctrines are substantially founded on Scripture, and our present object is to bring them into agreement. The doctrine that we are saved by a faith which has no tendency to produce works, and does not produce them (if there be such a doctrine), is obviously irreconcilable with the necessity of works and with the portions of Scripture which state that necessity.

V. Now, in the first place, it is Scriptural to say in an absolute sense that a man is justified and saved by faith. Even though no passage can be found in the Bible which states that we are justified by faith without works as opposed to faith accompanied by its proper works, yet, as faith is often put forward absolutely, in distinction from some other principle, and we are said to be saved by faith and not by that other principle, it must be inferred that the essential character of faith, considered apart from any manifestation of it, is the saving or justifying medium.

VI. Besides, it is reasonable to say that we are saved, and accepted as in the way of salvation, by faith, considered singly. Works cannot be of any moment in God's sight. If I profess friendship for a man like myself, it is only right that I should prove

it by my actions, for he has no other means of judging of the reality of my friendship. Or he may stand in need of my good offices, and if I withhold them I have no claim to be called his friend. But God does not stand in need of our works, and He knows our hearts. Therefore if we have faith, it is all that He requires : He sees it exist, and needs no proof of it.

VII. And yet it should not be said, in a universal and unqualified sense, that God does not need our good offices. Absolutely, and with regard to the possibilities of His omnipotence, He does not need them ; but relatively and instrumentally He does. He could work without means, but He chooses to work by means, and, so choosing, He requires the pliability and willing co-operation of the instruments He adopts. His Kingship is to be made known ; His children are to be fed and instructed ; all His creatures are to be assisted in their distress ; temptations must be overcome ; the poisonous weeds of falsehood and sin must be plucked forth ; the world must be helped to become better. For all this God wants our aid. It is by deeds of charity and kindness, by the practice of Christian virtue, by discountenancing evil in others and suppressing it in ourselves, that God's providence is carried on upon earth. That starving family want meat and drink to save them from destruction. That homeless stranger is dying for the soft accents of brotherhood. In this way God Himself is in need of assistance to

execute His will. Good works are not the idle parade of loyalty, they are not the superfluous evidence of faith; they are the light of a dark world, which Christians are required to hold forth; they are the taxes by which the government of Christ's kingdom is supported.

VIII. It is, however, true that God does not need the evidence or the aid of our works in connection with our finding favour in His sight. Faith is all that He requires. But faith is not only the ground of our justification; it is, moreover, the instrument of our salvation. Therefore, He requires a large and unreserved faith. He will not be satisfied with an indolent careless assent or a selfish dependence. It is evident throughout the New Testament history that the quality or disposition which attracts the attention of Jesus varies in degree, is insufficient in its lower stages, and succeeds in gaining its end only when it reaches a certain measure of intensity. The formal possession of faith is not enough. The apostles are frequently rebuked as men of "little faith" (Matt. viii. 26). Littleness of faith is in proportion to the admixture of doubt or doublemindedness (Matt. xiv. 31). Faith may be so adulterated that it becomes inoperative (Matt. xvii. 20, vii. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 2). It may die out (Luke viii. 13). Greater indications of faith (or indications of greater faith) succeed, while lesser indications are unsuccessful. Jesus grants to a greater

faith what He would refuse to a lesser (Matt. xv. 28). A higher display of faith is met by a higher type of miracle (Matt. viii. 7, 10, 13). The faith, therefore, that justifies or saves must be perfect faith. An idle opinion, or a certainty that is accompanied by practical indifference, or that is encroached on or overgrown by the lusts and cares of life, will not suffice. It must be a conviction of the whole force and importance of the truth, in all its consequences and duties, as well as of the truth itself. It must, in fact, be such a faith as would act if it had the opportunity. Setting aside the consideration whether a man is exposed to temptation or not, the faith, in the abstract, which can save him must be such that it would protect him from it if he were. He may be poor, but it must be such as would show him to be liberal if he were rich. He may be rich, but his faith must be so strong that he shall have the spirit that befits poverty. He may be alone and obscure, but it must be such that if he were illustrious and in the midst of crowds it would keep him in the path of duty. If it be such, God sees it and is satisfied. Regarded by itself alone, abstractly, such faith justifies. Whether a man possessed of faith in this degree could possibly pass through life without any opportunity of manifesting it, is a point that is not at all necessary to be decided. Faith in its own nature is a sufficient medium of justification and salvation; only it must be full-grown and perfect faith.

IX. There are two forms of expression used in reference to faith which, by suggesting an imaginary difference, tend to cause, or to perpetuate and extend, grave and fundamental misconceptions on the subject. We speak sometimes of faith strong enough to produce works, and sometimes of faith of such a kind as to produce works. The two expressions mean the same identical thing. Faith differs in quantity, not in quality—in degree, not in kind. The expression, "faith of such a kind," naturally suggests the idea that there are different kinds of faith, or more probably got into use from the preconceived notion that there are. The common division of faith into different kinds is in reality a division of the different kinds of persons who believe, or of the things which are believed. St. James does not distinguish the faith of devils from the faith of good men, save in degree and circumstance. The whole force and application of his argument would be lost if they were not the same in kind. You believe in a God, he argues, you only go so far as devils go in this. If you would differ from them, you must go farther. What is called historical faith is ordinary faith, described by its particular object at the time. Faith to work miracles, or to be worked on miraculously, is ordinary faith described by its then particular work or result. Difference of circumstances in those who believe, or difference of objects or operations on which the belief is exercised, does not imply, and cannot occasion, any difference in

the original faculty of belief or faith. The only possible difference with regard to the faith itself in all these, and all other such cases, is difference of strength, singleness, or degree. Scripture uniformly assumes that there is only one kind of faith (Heb. xi.). The one talent was of the same kind as the ten. The oil in the lamps of the foolish virgins was the same as that in the lamps of the wise: it differed only in quantity. The flame emitted by both was the same: it differed only in duration. The soil on which the corn was sown was the same in all parts of the field: it differed only in that there was more or less of it for the corn to take root in. The plants that came up were the same in kind: they differed only in that some of them had all the soil to themselves, and all the rain and sunshine, while others shared them with stones and weeds. So faith in a good man, in a good and honest heart, is the same in kind with faith in a bad man, if he has any. In the case of the good man it possesses all, or a large portion, of his heart and mind. In the case of the bad man it occupies only a small portion of his heart and mind, the remaining and far larger portion being given to the objects of sense, and to thoughts and cares of the world. If at one time I behold poverty and am moved to compassion, and relieve it, and if at another time I see poverty and am moved to compassion, but am prevented from relieving it by indolence or avarice, the compassion is essentially the same in both cases.

It differs in that it is strong in one case and weak in the other. The priest and the Levite felt pity for the wounded traveller, as well as the Samaritan. It was the uneasiness of an emotion to which they did not intend to yield that drove them to the other side of the way. It was the same emotion, yielded to by the Samaritan, that brought him to the side of the wounded man. St. James obviously implies that the only difference in faith is that sometimes it is attended by works and sometimes it is not—that is, that sometimes it is strong and effective, and sometimes weak and ineffective, or that sometimes it reigns alone and with authority in the heart, and sometimes it is driven from its throne by low and sordid interests.

X. The objection will probably be made that St. James, in his Epistle, does not treat of saving or genuine faith, but of dead faith. It is true that he does not treat of saving or genuine faith; but the want of genuineness and saving power lies in the absence of works, that is, in the want of strength and fulness in the faith to influence the actions. The epithet "dead" when applied in the New Testament to an abstract faculty or principle means "inoperative" (Rom. vii. 8, viii. 10; Jas. ii. 17, 20, 26). Faith which has no other proof of its existence to show but the word of him who has it, is as incapable of saving the soul from sinful habits as mere words of kindness are incapable of relieving a destitute brother (Jas. ii. 14-16). The idea that St. James is dealing in his

Epistle with a different kind of faith from saving or genuine faith is thoroughly unscriptural. He deals with the only kind of faith ever mentioned or alluded to in Scripture, as is sufficiently apparent from the fact that he is writing to well-instructed Christians (i. 17, 18), and that all that he requires to render the faith of which he treats perfect is the addition of works. If it were false faith, works could not make it perfect. We are continually warned in Scripture to prove our faith by our works. Not a single passage can be found in which we are warned to prove our works by our faith, it being taken for granted that the faith which produces works is of the right kind. There is no command, or intimation, or hint that we must substitute one kind of faith for another.*

* In the Revised Version of the New Testament, "dead in itself," i.e. absolutely or essentially dead (see Alford, *in loco*), is substituted in James ii. 17 for "dead being alone" or "by itself" in the received translation. This new rendering, besides that it introduces a foreign element of thought into Scripture, making the Holy Spirit speak in the unknown tongue of metaphysics, is contrary to all grammatical usage, and hopelessly disturbs the logical sequence of the apostle's argument. *Kaθ' éautò* always means "by itself" or "alone." See Acts xxviii. 16; Gen. xliii. 32; Plutarch on Virtue and Vice, i.; on Preserving Health, Precepts x. and xvii.; Xenophon's *Memoabilia*, book iii.; Aristotle's *Ethics*, book i.; Polybius, pp. 714, 715. In any of the passages referred to if "in itself" were put instead of "by itself," the principle of cohesion would be lost, and the whole context would sink into a heap of verbal ruins. This is what occurs in James by the introduction of the new translation. The writer is urging his readers to add to something they already have (i. 18). He does not bid them to substitute, but to supplement. This is manifest from ii. 26, where the spirit is spoken of not as a vivifying principle, but as an addition that makes perfect. As the

XI. There is one application of the faculty of faith that demands a special notice. By limiting the object of faith to the death of Christ, and its end to our personal pardon, a scheme of salvation is obtainable wholly disconnected with works of righteousness. If we are instantaneously and irreversibly pardoned and saved by throwing ourselves upon the death of Christ, it is quite evident that the after-life, whatever it may be, can have no influence on the foregone conclusion. Now, in order to establish this doctrine of salvation wholly independent of works, actual or implied, the death of Christ must be regarded as a bare historical fact. If its moral character be taken in, moral consequences will be involved, and the future fruits of righteousness will be comprehended in the idea of the faith or trust that rests on the Atonement. Therefore, in order to establish such a doctrine, the moral and spiritual bearings of the death of Christ must be shorn down until it is reduced to the hard, lifeless proportions of its material emblem, the brazen serpent that was raised in the wilderness, and until the saving of the soul becomes as passive and mechanical a process as the miraculous healing of the body. It is only by preventing the principle of moral obedience from being

body without the spirit is incomplete, so faith without works is incomplete. The body of Adam was incomplete until the soul was added to it. So faith is incomplete until works be added to it. If in this incomplete stage of faith it was said to be "absolutely dead," the whole line of the apostle's exhortation to add works to their faith would be broken, for no one would think of adding works to a faith "dead in itself."

included in the idea of this limited faith that it can be effectually hindered from ranking amongst its consequences. The result will then be that the entire practical portion of Scripture will be irreparably disjoined from the doctrinal, the description of a final judgment according to works will become an isolated and wholly unaccountable phenomenon, and the one essential principle of Christian doctrine will be opposed to the whole stream and current of Scripture language and to the whole analogy of nature. But, in fact, the faith that is concerned with the Atonement and with personal salvation only is not a special kind of faith, but a mere limitation of the mind and conscience to a superficial and narrow view of a most pregnant subject. It is a repetition under the Christian scheme of the fatal and prevalent error of the Jews under the older dispensation, who alienated sacrifice from obedience (1 Sam. xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6; Amos v. 21-24; Micah vi. 8; Is. i. 14, 17, lviii. 6, 7; Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). The death of Christ is never presented to us by itself for our trust or reliance. We cannot fix our attention on it alone without mutilating the personality of Jesus, as well as the integrity of our own faculties. Faith in Christ means faith in the sum of all that He was, and did, and taught, and suffered. If we believe or trust in less, we do not exercise the whole faculty, nor comprehend the whole object. Such expressions as "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31)

must be interpreted in the proper fulness of the three terms, "Believe," "Lord Jesus Christ," and "saved." "Believe" must be taken in at least that broad practical sense in which it could only have been understood by those to whom it was first addressed, according to their habits of thought and language. "Lord Jesus Christ" meant a history, an example, and a body of precepts, as well as a Person or an event. "Saved" could only mean, to Christian or Pagan, redeemed from the sordidness of sin into the nobleness of virtue. To believe in Jesus is not to depend upon a supreme magnificent God, arrayed in the splendours of eternity, for an easy deliverance from toil and trouble, nor upon a Sacrifice whereby the favour of that great Being can be attained as by a charm: but it is, in addition to all besides, to look up to, as our Guide and Friend, a righteous, persecuted, world-hated Man, who offers us His own example and fortunes as the wisest and happiest lot that earth affords. We cannot divorce the moral element from the faith, the life, or the salvation. Even if we concentrate our faith on the death of Christ as ordained by God, we lose that half of the lesson which throws light upon the other half, by forgetting that He was slain by men because He rebuked their evil ways. We must not, in fact, believe in a characterless Saviour. His character and commands are intensified on the Cross. Thence, with more emphatic voice than ever, He cries, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

Belief in Christ crucified is belief that the unknown and unimaginable Majesty of Heaven and the true majesty of earth were represented by One who died on a cross. Most truly does it require a renewed heart to receive this doctrine. St. Paul always speaks of the Crucifixion as something morally affecting his life. "God forbid," he says, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14). Faith in the death and atonement of Christ, apart from their moral character, is, therefore, not a distinct kind of faith, but an imperfect stage or degree of faith.

XII. Let us enumerate the steps which we have made in our inquiry. Faith is the medium of salvation. Faith is not distinguished into different kinds, but by different degrees. The faith that saves must be perfect in degree. Faith perfect in degree is equivalent to what is variously called strong, great, or much faith. The next step will be to ascertain what is meant by strong faith.

XIII. It follows from man's mental constitution, and is seen by daily observation, that the amount of force exerted upon the conscience or reason by truth is in proportion to the fulness in which it is willingly contemplated, and to the constancy with which it is kept present before the mind. Whatever the absolute

importance of particular ideas may be, their relative importance, that is, their actual influence on our thoughts and conduct, is regulated precisely by the reception we give them. The most insignificant subject, if it impregnates our whole mental being, becomes all in all to us. Mind has the power of making the most essentially trifling fact or dogma momentous, or the most momentous one trifling. The most momentous fact, if we refuse to think about it, is nothing to us, our belief in it is weak and idle. The most trifling fact, if we continually dwell upon it, is everything to us. Whatever we think most about, quite irrespective of its intrinsic worth, seems most important to us. Some ideas are fleeting and transitory: they pass, cause no effect, leave no impression. Others are lasting, perpetually recurring and forming the character, or rather constituting and being the character, by their continual presence. What we think most about we mentally and morally are, and what we mentally and morally are, we say and do in our outward lives. The actions of men are good or bad just in proportion as they render themselves good or bad by choosing and cherishing good or bad thoughts and principles. Men have favourite ruling ideas. It does not so much matter, as to the effect produced, what the ideas are, as how much we cherish and encourage them. Many a man is governed all his life by an idea which to all others appears unworthy of a moment's serious consideration. But trifling and

weak as it seems to others, it is powerful to him who entertains it, because all the strength of his nature is imparted to it.

XIV. Every truth and every falsehood has a certain inherent moral direction belonging to it which it communicates to the mind that is identified with it. This direction the mind, by its living power, transmutes into motion. There are some truths whose direction is more in agreement with the structural and constitutional tendencies of the mind than that of others. These as they fall in with and recreate the original disposition, will strengthen it, bring it forth into action, and increase their influence by repetition. There are also falsehoods whose tendency is in unison with the implanted evil bias of the mind, and they also develop into acts and grow more powerful as they are repeated in practice. But there are, again, fragmentary views of truth, facts torn from their moral sources and connections, one-sided representations, which address themselves to the emotions and the imagination, and because of their disconnection with fundamental innate principles are weakened by repetition, or occupy the attention without ever influencing the conduct. The deep-rooted eternal practical principles of Christianity, judgment, mercy, and faith, of which all its precepts are imperfect utterances, of which all its facts are instances, of which its most awful central fact is the ever-living and ever-

quicken illustration, constitute the mind that receives and keeps them perpetually and prominently in its consciousness a mind of strong faith or much faith. The mind that seldom contemplates them, or fills their places with distorted shadows of them, or with appeals to passion or to sense, or with idle formal obedience to human commands, is a mind of weak faith or little faith. Weak faith or little faith means true Christian doctrine little or seldom thought about; true Christian doctrine much or continually thought about is strong faith. This is the faith that is the actual medium of salvation. St. Paul (in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans), although any mention of degrees of faith did not belong to his immediate purpose (which was not to show that we are justified or accepted as guiltless, by a higher degree of faith, and not a lower; but that the principle by which we are justified is faith, and not works), is nevertheless anxiously careful, by varied and repeated epithets, to impress on his readers, that the faith which can be counted as righteousness must be strong and unwavering. "Abraham . . . who against hope believed in hope . . . and being not weak in faith . . . he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And *therefore* it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 18-22). Faith is not actually right-

eousness, for no human quality can achieve perfect moral obedience; but since it contains in its idea an avowal of its insufficiency, and an appeal for pardon, it is treated for the sake of Christ, who is its object, as if it were absolute righteousness, when it occupies the whole mind, and engages every thought.

XV. It follows from this, that the first indispensable step to make our faith strong and effective, is to remove the objects that distract its attention from its own proper object, and to leave all the forces of the soul at its disposal; just as we enable a plant to grow and increase by plucking away the weeds from around it, and thus allowing the earth to nurture it and the sun to cherish it without a rival. The truths of the Bible can avail us against the cares and temptations of life only by our giving to them the amount of regard which these cares and temptations usually engross, and in which, in fact, their strength exists. If, therefore, we desire to increase our faith, our procedure should be to enthrone in our hearts that degree of rightly informed faith which we possess, and to render to it all the homage of our thoughts. In this way it will become powerful. Faith as a grain of mustard seed, if it govern and guide the energies of the soul, can move mountains.

XVI. If a faith abiding and powerful be that which is essential to the salvation of men, we might expect

that the necessity for it would be very strongly inculcated, and that the description of it would form a prominent and constantly recurring topic in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. But how can faith be described? How can its different degrees be distinguished and separately held up to notice? Even if there were various kinds of faith, how would it be possible to discriminate them by any intrinsic marks? We cannot explain motives or feelings in themselves. The faintest joy or sadness could not be made known in distinction from the most violent and strongest by any description of the mere feelings. We can distinguish them and their degrees only by the effects which they produce. The breeze and the storm possess no internally distinctive qualities by which their difference can be explained. If we wished to describe them, we should say that the one rustled the leaves or fanned the cheek, while the other tore down the monarchs of the forest, and lined the shore with wrecks. There is no conceivable way of showing the difference, save by pointing to the different results. The wind blows, and we hear the sound thereof. If we did not hear the sound, we should not know of its existence. With the effects produced our knowledge begins and ends. So it is with all spiritual emotions and principles; we know of them only by their effects. I may feel an emotion of pity so weak and feeble that caprice or selfishness prevents its acting, and so hides its existence from the observer; or I may feel it in

so strong a degree as to deny myself in order to relieve the object of it, and thus manifest it to the world. It would be impossible to distinguish one from the other except by referring to the outward visible results. So the love of God and of Christ may be so feeble that it falls before the least temptation, or so strong that it animates every action. So faith may be so cowardly and so partial that each form of worldliness triumphs over it, or it may become so mighty in its fulness, and so plant itself on the eternal verities of heaven reproduced in the human soul, that it overcomes the world in its most seductive form. In all these cases the only mode of distinguishing is by the consequences, the visible tangible results. In this manner the Bible describes perfect, saving faith to us. In this way works are necessary, that it may be known that we have perfect faith. Faith is all that God demands from us, but it must be perfect faith, and we could not know what perfect faith meant unless it were described by its effects. St. James, whose special object is not to prove that we are justified and saved by faith as opposed to any other principle, but that we are justified and saved by strong, constant, and pure faith, as opposed to faith transient, weak, and blended, has no other mode of indicating the requisite degree of strength and purity save the specification of the works which it does. And just as St. Paul might have said that we are justified not by faith, but by strong faith, St. James says that we are justified not

by faith only, but by works, "works" being the equivalent of "strong faith." "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? . . . And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. . . . Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. ii. 21-24).

XVII. This manner of describing strong faith is only one phase of the general method of the New Covenant. Law had failed in two directions; it had neither instilled the right principle nor produced the right conduct. The Gospel aims at instilling the right principle as its main object, and, as the only means—the only means intelligible to us and appealing to our reason, not denying but taking for granted the secret, inward, spiritual process which God conducts—of doing this efficiently, it describes and demands the right conduct. The reason of this is plain when we remember that the name of any mental quality or motive is a word conventionally representing certain actions, together with the habit of mind which produces them, and that the actions are the only intelligible part of the definition. If the virtues by which Jesus wished His people to be distinguished were taught to them by their current names only, His teaching would be liable to all the ambiguities of language which degeneracy of morals invariably either

follows from or introduces. Words are subject to the same kind of abuse and depravation as law. Their meaning may be frittered away by subtlety, or lost in vague generalities, exploded in idle sentiment, or evaded by trivial performances. Such names of principles as friendship, patriotism, magnanimity, and all terms, in fact, which aspire at expressing the inward glow that accompanies a lofty thought, whose sense, in consequence, is in danger of evaporating into sound, and whose utterance is to some extent a waste of the emotion, and may possibly be regarded as a compensation for the absence of the practice, are omitted in the teaching of Jesus and His disciples, and in their place we have only an account of the sober deeds that testify to the existence of the principles themselves in the hearts of the doers. The fate of the only rhetorical word which the translators of our English Bible needlessly imported in order to give greater distinction to a simple enumeration of the daily duties that love inspires, might be sufficient to prove the wisdom of this rule (1 Cor. xiii.). Jesus has therefore left the qualities that mark His followers, represented, not by an ambitious terminology, but by the abiding features of nature and by His own example. He describes the quality by the one unchanging and infallible test of its existence, its strength, and its purity—action. The character which He wished to impress on His disciples He illustrated by pointing out to them the practice or attitude of some class or object

for their imitation. Trust in God for the necessities of life He exemplified by the lilies of the field, and the fowls of the air. Docility and innocence He instanced by the demeanour of children. To show to what extent Christians of all ranks should minister to each other, He washed His disciples' feet. He expressly recorded the universal lesson that the goodness or badness of the heart can be known only by the goodness or badness of the outward life. But a good heart in the Christian idea is not merely a heart free from evil habits, nor one acquainted with the truths of religion, but a heart thoroughly impregnated with those truths to the exclusion of all beside. John the Baptist described repentance by its effects. St. Paul proved the superiority of his ministry, that is, the greatness of his faith, by his labours and sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 23). The account given of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi.) first adverts in figurative language to the subjective certainty of the mind engrossed with the truths of revelation, and then describes this condition by its appropriate achievements. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, in various ways proved the faith that was in them by their obedience. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Their rejection of this world proved the

largeness of their yearning for the invisible, their works proved the fulness of their faith. St. Paul's description of love (1 Cor. xiii.) is a more delicate and searching application of the same test. The objective accomplishments of eloquence, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and zeal are contrasted with the subjective condition of the mind wholly surrendered in all its thoughts, feelings, and affections to righteousness, and manifesting itself in those unsuspicious, uncensorious, unselfish dispositions which, so far as they prevail, sweeten the intercourse of life. Showy and official acts are not so certain a proof of perfect pervasive faith as those minute courtesies of religion which flow forth with the ease and constancy of nature, and tell that the whole fountain of the heart is softened and purified. The ever-repeated enforcement of good works, therefore, which we find in Scripture, must be understood as the Divine plan for enabling believers to know with certainty whether they are keeping the true objects of faith as revealed by Jesus, before their minds constantly and with singleness of aim. "Who-soever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house on a rock" (Matt. vii. 24). "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17). "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth

himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas. i. 22-25).

XVIII. Several questions offer themselves at this point for elucidation. How are we to regard works materially good in themselves when they are performed by the hypocrite? How are we to know when we have arrived at the degree of active obedience with which we should rest satisfied as the mark of our justification? How are we to distinguish the works of a narrow and uninstructed, though zealous, faith, from those of a full and well-informed faith? How are we to estimate works done coldly and reluctantly, as compared with those done gladly and without an effort?

XIX. Those questions find their solution in the principle that faith, in its advanced form, is an established moral habit, a set and bias of all the mental faculties and powers. Every difficulty vanishes experimentally when this spiritual disposition is attained. All theoretic difficulties disappear when it is viewed as an object of contemplation. Saving faith may be taken as a name descriptive of a mind that pursues its highest instinct as fulfilled and exemplified in the life

and death and precepts of Jesus, that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that meditates on these things, that gives itself wholly to them, that continues in them. It is the character of the man who loves God in His revealed righteousness, with all his heart and soul and strength. Sudden impulses and momentary aspirations after truth and goodness are of the nature of faith, but it is the constancy and fulness of faith that impart to it the power to save. Fixing our hope and trust on the sacrifice of Christ is to dwell in the fullest light of Divine love ; but unless we penetrate to the principle in God's nature from which that act emanated, unless we form it in our souls, and reproduce it in our lives, the light and warmth in which we dwell have wrought no regeneration in us. To be one with God is to have His nature in activity. It is not enough to wish for heaven, because faith is the disposition of one whose thoughts are habitually set, not on the future joys of heaven, but on the present working principles of heaven, truth, and right. Those are the unseen things that are eternal. To be occupied in them is to be free from the vices that poison the inevitable sorrows of earth, and to produce and promote the virtues that hasten the coming of the kingdom of God.

XX. Works, therefore, are to be estimated in their connection with character, or habitual and predominant motives.

1. In a treatise on Faith and Works, by works must be understood the works that proceed from faith. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. A work that is naturally good, that is, one which is useful to the object of it, may be done from a hypocritical motive. It then has a twofold character. It is good in the sense of being beneficial to the receiver of it, and it is hypocritical with regard to the motive of the doer of it. Our nature is so constituted that it is the character of the motive from which we do an act that is strengthened in us by doing it, and not the character of the act. A prayer that is not addressed solely to God renders the utterer of it the opposite of devout. An act may be good, as an act of almsgiving, but if we do it from ostentation and vanity, we become, not more liberal, but more ostentatious and vain. We deceive ourselves when we do good deeds in order to gain human praise, if we imagine that because the deeds are in themselves good, God will also reward us. The reward that God gives for a deed of pure love is the natural increase of the love that prompted the deed. This reward cannot be given if the act be done from vainglory, because in that case vainglory in an increased degree will be the natural consequence. The motives of our actions are the seed that is sown and the crop will be of the same kind. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall

of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7, 8). The laws of God and of nature cannot be imposed on: he who does a good act with a corrupt motive will reap corruption. Christ is very emphatic in His warnings against our allowing evil motives to neutralize our good deeds. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 1; comp. Luke xiv. 12-14). The false prophets against whom He puts His followers on their guard (Matt. vii. 15) are not teachers and doers of evil, but teachers and doers of good, who act from worldly motives, who wear the garb of sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves. The only way in which such persons are to be detected is by the gradual growth and development of their character. If the germ of the character be wolfishness or worldliness, a wolfish or worldly character will eventually be manifested. The ripening character is the fruit by which we are to know them. We say of religious men who have succeeded in gaining the wealth or the good-will of the world, and become proud and worldly, that prosperity has corrupted them. We should more correctly infer that the corrupt tree, that is, the essentially corrupt motive, has borne corrupt fruit, that the inward ravening has absorbed the "sheep's clothing."

2. Justification is not to be sought as an end in

itself, but as the groundwork of salvation. Justification is the relation in which we are allowed to stand towards God because of our faith: salvation is the renovation of our characters or dispositions by the instrumentality of faith. Justification is the legal aspect of our salvation, and from the first stage to the last of our salvation our justification is by faith, because our salvation is never perfected on earth. In reference to our state of condemnation Christ was delivered to death, thus enabling us to be justified; and then in reference to our justification He was raised again, thus enabling us to be saved (Rom. iv. 25). It is obvious, therefore, that there can be no degree of progress in goodness with which we should rest contented, as a proof that our end is gained. St. Peter came to Christ asking Him how often he was bound to forgive his offending brother. Christ taught him in reply that our forgiveness of our brother must be infinite, because it should be the reflection of God's forgiveness of us. We should strive to be perfect as God is perfect. The rich young man who came to Christ asking how he was to gain eternal life is an instance of imperfect or interrupted salvation.

3. The character or disposition that covers the ground of salvation is the mind of Christ, the measure of the stature of Christ. Faith is the instrument, or element by, or in, which it is attained. But in the course of doing its work it discovers, brings into light, and is transformed into, a mightier and holier prin-

ciple than itself, which thenceforth assumes the superiority. This principle is love (1 Cor. xiii.). Faith becomes subordinate to love. The thought of personal gain, temporal or spiritual, is lost in the sense of universal interests, of the establishment of God's reign, of the designs of Providence, of the end of creation. When love takes the rule, it so tinctures the works of faith and hope with its own essence that it makes them its own. So it is said to do all the works of faith and hope. It believeth all things and hopeth all things. St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3) and St. James (Jas. ii. 1) warn their readers not to be satisfied with a partial, one-sided, imperfect faith, that reaches to some one portion of their conscience and leaves the remainder untouched; that contemplates only some fragmentary form of doctrine, and is blind to all besides; that, in fact, has not been transfigured into love, either in its works or its worship.

4. Man's twofold nature is the easy explanation of the two sets of opposite experience which we find ascribed to the believer in Scripture; on the one hand, the blessedness, the peace, the easy yoke and light burden; on the other, the plucking out of the right eye and the daily bearing of the cross. St. Paul delighted in the law of God after the inward man, but saw another law in his members that wrought him wretchedness. The only conclusive settlement of this struggle that he can find is, that he will serve the righteous and holy law in whatever form it pre-

sents itself, whether it comes as the law of God to his consenting and rejoicing mind, or as the law that provokes sin to his unwilling and resisting flesh. In either case he will obey (Rom. vii. 25). There is, therefore, no discouragement to be gathered from the reluctance of our lower nature to do the will of God. On the contrary, the pain and resistance are often the measure of our sincerity. A deed of self-denial done for an earthly prize is cheerfully performed. The suffering is the mark of faith, because it is the subjugation of the flesh. Obedience to God's commands, when pure from temporal motives, is always the sign of faith. Even when the light of the spirit is blurred by the mist of earthly passion, and God seems hard and exacting, the only safe course is to obey (Luke xix. 22, 23). This is the lowest mark of faith. The highest is when love acts freely and spontaneously, without ambitious motive, or conscious humility, or intentional condescension, or imaginary identification with Christ of those to whom it ministers. "Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 37-40).

XXI. The faith of St. Paul aims at the abolition of national distinctions (Rom. iii. 28) ; that of St. James at the abolition of class distinctions (Jas. ii. 1). The faith of Christ is the triumph of love over fastidious selfishness on one side, and every form of misery on the other.

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